

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Child and Family Services Agency



**Federal Review of District Child Welfare Finds a Strong System,
Good Outcomes for Children, and Room for Improvement**

The District of Columbia is meeting 100 percent of national standards for child welfare systems and performing above 80 percent on four of the seven national standards regarding positive outcomes for child welfare clients. Local child welfare needs to improve in engaging birth families, serving families in their homes, and providing timely permanent solutions for children and youth in foster care. These and other conclusions about the effectiveness of citywide services for abused and neglected children and their families come from the final report on the District's second Federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), which the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau released January 30, 2008.

In the final report, Federal reviewers noted:

The 2007 CFSR identified several areas of high performance in the District of Columbia with regard to achieving outcomes for children. [DHHS] acknowledges the hard work and progress of the District of Columbia to make positive changes in its practice, and to enhance services to children and families in the child welfare system. . . . [I]t is important to note the significant progress in the District of Columbia's performance since the 2001 CFSR.

"From our perspective, the CFSR findings add up to a grade of 'B-minus' for local child welfare, which accurately characterizes how far we've come through six years of intensive reform," said CFSA Director Sharlynn Bobo. "These Federal findings confirm and enhance what we know from our own continuous performance monitoring. We're actively working to bring every area the CFSR examines up to a solid 'A.'"

The intensive, weeklong CFSR in June 2007 looked at the citywide child welfare network (which includes the Child and Family Services Agency, Family Court, and services from numerous local public and private entities) through examination of 65 case records and hundreds of interviews with client families, social workers, service providers, and other stakeholders. Reviewers drew the random sample of child welfare cases from the period of April 1, 2006, through June 25, 2007.

CFSR Overview

Rates child welfare system performance against national standards for:

- **Systemic factors**—seven categories composed of 22 total sub-items with ratings of either "in" or "not in substantial conformity"
- **Outcomes**—seven categories composed of 23 total sub-items with ratings of "substantial conformity" for achievement of an outcome in 95 percent of sample cases, "strength" for achievement in 90 percent, and "not in substantial conformity" for achievement in less than 90 percent

Summary of Major Findings

- The District is meeting standards for all seven systemic factors (100%) including: statewide information system; case review system; quality assurance system; training; array of local services; agency responsiveness to the community; and foster and adoptive parent recruitment, licensing, and retention. In their final report, Federal reviewers wrote that "for the most part, these systemic factors were highly praised by the stakeholders interviewed during the onsite CFSR." In the District's first CFSR in 2001, they rated the city as meeting standards in only four (57%) of these seven systemic factors.
- The city is not fully meeting standards for the seven outcomes—but did achieve high ratings in four

categories: children receiving services to meet educational needs (88%), children receiving services to meet physical and mental health needs (87%), children remaining at home safely whenever possible (82%), and protection of children (81%).

- The District also achieved high ratings on eight of the 23 sub-items relating to outcomes:
 - Low incidence of child re-entry into foster care and placement of children in foster care near their birth families (both 100%).
 - Low incidence of repeated maltreatment (96%).
 - Good physical health of children in the system (94%).
 - Preserving family connections (92%).
 - Achieving stability for foster teens who can't return home, providing services that prevent children from entering foster care, and keeping siblings together in care (all 91%).
- District child welfare needs to improve in:
 - Engaging birth parents, especially fathers, in case planning and regularly visiting their children in foster care.
 - Serving children CFSA monitors in their birth homes.
 - Promptly achieving permanence for children and teens in foster care through return to their parents, connection to extended family, legal guardianship, or adoption.

The Federal Final Report on the District's CFSR is available at

http://basis.caliber.com/cwig/ws/cwmd/docs/cb_web/Blob/662.pdf?m=2&w=NATIVE%28%27DT+%3D+%27%27CFSR+Final+Report%27%27+and+STATE+%3D+%27%27District+of+Columbia%27%27+and+RPERIOD+%3D+%27%271st++Round+CFSR%27%27%2C%27%272nd++Round+CFSR%27%27%27%29

Next Steps

On February 25, 2008, the District submitted the Federally-required Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address outcomes the CFSR found in need of improvement. CFSA and other local child-serving stakeholders began working on this plan in September 2007. Once the plan achieves Federal approval, the city will have two years to implement improvements. CFSA will provide quarterly progress reports to the DHHS Children's Bureau throughout that period.

CFSR Background

The DHHS Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families conducts cyclical reviews of child welfare in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico to improve national performance in addressing child abuse and neglect. Reviewers evaluate state performance against a set of rigorous standards designed to improve outcomes for the nation's most vulnerable children and families. DHHS has the authority to withhold portions of Federal funding for child welfare from states based on their degree of nonconformity with these national standards.

The District's CFSR process involved numerous stakeholders in conducting a pre-review Statewide Assessment and developing a report for Federal approval, working with Federal reviewers to conduct the on-site review, and preparing the District's Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) for Federal approval. A list of participating stakeholders is attached. ■

Attachment
Stakeholders Participating in the District's CFSR Process

Advocates and Advisors:

DC Child and Family Services Agency Citizen Review Panel
Foster and Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center

Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaboratives:

Far Southeast Collaborative
HF/TC Collaborative Council
Southwest/West of the River Collaborative

Private, Non-Profit Organizations:

Consortium for Child Welfare
DC Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
KidsPeace National Center for Kids Overcoming Crisis
National Center for Children and Families
Sasha Bruce Youthworks

Public Organizations:

DC Child and Family Services Agency
DC Department of Health, Addiction Prevention and Recovery Administration
DC Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services
District of Columbia Office of the Attorney General, Abuse and Neglect Section
District of Columbia Superior Court